



City Council Worksession Meeting Minutes – Electronic Meeting

February 23, 2021

I. CALL TO ORDER

5:00PM

Mayor, Stephen D. Murray III

All members of Council in attendance (Phil Cromer, Neil Lipsitz, Mitch Mitchell, and Mayor Murray)

II. PRESENTATION

A. Affordable Housing Task Force

Deborah Johnson, Task Force Liaison, gave an overview of how the Task Force came to be a 13-member group with 9 voting and 4 non-voting members and how processes came to be and the materials they utilized. She spoke about the outcomes of the various meetings that were held. The types of housing that are needed were discussed, with the highest category being homes that rent from between \$500 and \$874 per month or sell between \$100,000 and \$199,000. These categories came from the Housing Needs Assessment Study that was previously done. She went on to cover the priorities that the Committee came up with that are in 7 different categories ranging from highest to lowest in each, that included a need for donated land for Non-Profits, creating a holistic approach for fee incentives and have an Affordable Housing Specialist within the City. The Committee also made suggestions regarding changes that should be made to various City Ordinances.

Councilman Mitchell stated that the Town of Hilton Head explored the possibility of creating affordable housing from buildings that were underutilized and inquired if the City is in the same situation and if the Task Force explored that possibility.

Mrs. Johnson, stated yes, and showed it as a medium priority under Adaptive Reuse and stated that the City does not have a lot of empty commercial buildings, but there are a few that may be able to be repurposed.

Lise Sundrla, Beaufort Historic Foundation, stated that Savannah, Georgia, partnered with Mercy Housing and turned some very old buildings into affordable rental properties using low-income tax credits.

Interim Pro Tem, Cromer, recommends that this be a topic at the upcoming Retreat, so Council has an opportunity to do an in-depth review.

Mayor Murray stated that Hilton Head recently approved density bonuses and sees that is not a recommendation of this committee and inquired why.

David Prichard, Community and Economic Development Director, stated that there have been several projects that had resistance to them where certain densities were allowed by right. He stated that per the Code, as it reads now, the City was trying to increase density.

He feels that the City needs to make sure they are happy with the Code as written, before any type of recommendations is made.

Mayor Murray, referencing the Committee's recommendation for a Housing Specialist, he remembers the County talking about hiring a Housing Coordinator and asked if there was any progress with that.

Mrs. Johnson stated that there was someone hired, but they were only there for about 3 months, then it was decided that the position would be eliminated.

III. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Flood/Fill Ordinance Review

Rob Merchant, Community Development Deputy Director, spoke about how this developed from the Lady's Island Plan to work on a Fill Ordinance and a Coastal Resilience Overlay. A task force that consisted of local jurisdictions and several individuals in the construction industry came together to create these policies. He then went over a few points from the Fill Ordinance and its requirements that included limiting fill to 3 vertical feet or less, but also allows flexibility if needed on smaller developments.

Councilman Lipsitz asked if this would affect any areas that are being considered for affordable housing.

Mr. Merchant gave a few examples of some areas in the City where this limitation might apply but does not feel any would be impacted.

Bruce Skipper, Building Official, spoke about the current City's Fill Ordinance Section as it reads and feels that it is enough. He stated that if Council would like to incorporate some of the language from the County's proposed ordinance as well, that can be done.

Mayor Murray indicated that he had thought the City and the County had come together back when the Lady's Island Plan Steering Committee was implemented to work on this Ordinance and is curious about why there seems to be two separate Ordinances.

David Prichard, Community and Economic Development Director, stated that they did not realize that Council wanted to change their fill ordinance requirements.

Mayor Murray asked that the significant differences between the two ordinances be reconciled before the second reading of the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance.

Interim Mayor Pro Tem, Cromer, inquired if the County's Fill Ordinance required the offsite fill to be tested for contaminants.

Mr. Skipper, responded yes, and that the City's does not require this testing, but is being recommended.

Mr. Merchant went over the proposed Coastal Resilience Overlay that would require notification at real estate closings when a property is in a low-lying area that might be prone to flooding. He stated that this is being considered by Beaufort County and the Town of Port Royal.

Mayor Murray asked if the Overlay Ordinance will need to be adopted for properties that are in the City Limits.

Mr. Merchant, stated yes, that each jurisdiction would need to.

Mayor Murray, asked if County Council has considered this, and if so, what stage are they in.
Mr. Merchant stated that both Ordinances are to be heard by the Planning Commission in March.

IV. ADJOURN

6:45 PM

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